

ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS

SUPPORTING CLASS STRUGGLE PRISONERS

Bulletin #1 * March 1996

free

WHAT IS THE ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS ?

The Anarchist Black Cross (ABC) is an international class struggle and anarchist prisoner support group. We believe that prisons serve no function except to preserve the ruling classes. We also believe that a free society must find alternative, effective ways of dealing with anti-social crime. But a decrease in anti-social crime is only likely to happen (and therefore prison abolition can only be a realistic option) accompanied by a dramatic change in our economic, social and political systems. These conditions lie at the root of both anti-social crime and a reason for a prison system and our primary goal is to make these fundamental changes. We work for a stateless, classless, co-operative society, free from privilege or domination based on race or gender.

But it is not enough to build the grass roots movements necessary to bring about these changes in society, we also have to defend them. The ABC defends those who are captured and persecuted for carrying out acts on behalf of our movements. The ABC aims to recognise and expose the struggles of prisoners in general, and political prisoners and prisoners of war in particular. We regard prisoners as an active part of our movement and seek to maintain their past and potential contributions by acting as a link back to the continuing struggle. Increased communication between activists both inside and outside inspires resistance on both sides of the prison walls. Although imprisonment is, in its self political, political prisoners of warfare being held specifically for their beliefs or actions.

We don't place judgements on what are valid or invalid expressions of resistance; non-violence is not a criterion for support. We hope that we can encourage activists by providing assurance that even if you are persecuted for your activities, the movement will not abandon you: we will take care of our own. Through the ABC we are building organisational support for resistance.

Barricade Books Battles Bollocks

Malcolm Ross, former member of Melbourne's Barricade bookshop collective, will be in court on March 15 defending charges of displaying objectionable publications under the Classification of Films and Publications Act. The publications were a pamphlet depicting gay sex, a t-shirt with a semi-erect penis with the caption 'Jesus is Cumming' and another t-shirt with the slogan, 'Fuck the New World Order's Police'. These items were seized in an armed raid on Barricade Bookshop in July last year, and are simply an intimidatory tactic against the bookshop.

This hearing is a 'contest mention' - in order to determine what witnesses will be called and what evidence will be led, and the actual trial a few months later. It is also one of the many instances of people being charged under these censorship laws. (The editors of the La Trobe Uni student newspaper, Rabelais, are facing similar charges for re-printing a 'How To Shoplift Guide', which was originally published in a Macquarie University Student Anarchist magazine.)

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Ben Alterman Hunger Strike

On Friday the 9th of February Ben Alterman, a prisoner at Loddon Prison in Castlemaine, Victoria, commenced an indefinite hunger strike. He's now well into the twentieth day of the strike.

Ben decided to take this action in protest at prison officers withholding items of his incoming personal mail. Some of the mail which has been ripped off was copies of radical publications. As well as ripping off his mail, they've been photocopying letters and passing them round amongst themselves to use against him. He's also been prevented from gaining access to his own personal funds to send to various anarchist and revolutionary organizations as donations and to receive some of their publications.

Screws also refused to allow him to have an official ombudsman's complaint form when he tried to report these abuses of his rights.

This is a blatant attack on Ben because of his political beliefs and he vows to continue the strike until his demands for an end to these abuses are fulfilled.

In a public statement about the hunger strike, Ben says: "...if the management of this prison sees fit to react in the time honoured way by segregating me, or taking me out the back of the unit and 'roughing me up' (an option that has already been offered to me), or having me transferred, as punishment, back to Pentridge, then all I can say is that in my mere twenty-nine years I have had all these, and a lot more, things done to me by people in blue, black and olive drab uniforms and I daresay

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"Any movement that does not support their political internees is a sham movement." Ojore N. Lutalo

WRITING TO PRISONERS

Prison isolates people from the outside world. Besides visiting, writing is the most important thing you can do to help break down that isolation, so that the prisoner does not feel forgotten. If you can't think of much to write, just send a wishing card wishing them well, it's the fact that you have bothered to write that matters. The following is a loose frame-work, some suggestions and considerations to keep in mind when writing to prisoners...

1) Please forget any preconceptions or stereotypes you may have heard of people in prison - they are no different to people on the outside.

2) In your first letter, explain a little about why you are writing, and ask if the person would like to be writing to you.

a) Introduce yourself, describing yourself, your family, your work, where you live, and the concern that leads you to write.

b) Feel free to ask about prison life, about the persons interests, where they are from, whether they have any appeals in progress etc.

c) do not ask right away about the 'crime', but let them volunteer that information.

d) its good to ask questions, because it gives the person something to respond to, but do not ask too many at once - especially in the first letter. Let trust build between you, and always try to share as much about yourself as you ask the other person to share.

3) If you feel you will only be able to write, for example, monthly, make this clear to the person. It is important not to promise things that you will not be able to follow through on.

4) If you want to send things like books, stamps, stationary, or food, ask first whether the person wants them, whether they will be able to enter the prison and how they will need to be sent.

It is advisable to contact the prison first to find out if these things can be sent to prisoners as it often differs from prison to prison. Prepare to be given the run around but persist and you will get results.

5) The person may ask you to send money - if you feel good about that, then send it. NEVER feel obliged to respond to a request for money, but always respond honestly. If you do send money, again, be sure to find out first in what form it must be sent.

6) You may want to visit this person in addition to writing. That would be Great! just ask him or her whether they want you to visit and what the hours and restrictions are concerning visits.

7) Always save letters from the prisoner, as they could be helpful in the appeals process, future reference, etc.

8) Most prisons do not allow letters with no senders name and address. It is possible to use a false ones, but, bear in mind the prisoner may reply, so use an address you can receive mail from.

9) Do not be put off if you do not receive a reply straight away, prisoners are sometimes limited to how many letters they can write each week.

10) Get writing! Don't let prisoners remain isolated.

REMEMBER : All mail to prisoners is opened and censored, so don't write anything that could jeopardise future actions or someone's freedom.

BBBB contd...

Malcolm was charged because he was working at the bookshop at the time of the raid, the kops seem to have trouble with bringing criminal charges against a collective, when no-one is 'in charge'.

Further information and letters of support can be sent to: Barricade Books, 115 Sydney Rd, Brunswick, Vic, 3056

Ben Alterman contd.

that this overweight body, and what's left of its soul, can handle some more of the same. I would also hazard to guess that my friends outside of this place will eventually hear of such action and include it in the letters of protest that they are already writing in protest at the prison censorship I have encountered."

Ben A. Alterman 102650, Loddon Prison, Locked Bag 3, Castlemaine, Vic 3450.

Send letters of protest to:

John Van Groningen, Director, Correctional Services, 452 Flinders St, Melbourne, Vic 3000. Fax: 03-9627 6611

Demand that Ben be moved from unit 5, Loddon Gaol, as he fears for his safety while he's there.



Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin In Australia?

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, former Black Panther prisoner, author of Anarchism and Black Revolution and Anarchist Black Cross activist, has expressed interest in touring Australia late in the year or early next year. Through his Black revolutionary work he was in contact with the Aboriginal movement in Australia, and is grateful of the support of the

Aboriginal movement in their 'Free Lorenzo' campaign while he was imprisoned for 15 years, culminating in his release in 1983. He has done numerous speaking tours all over the U.S. and in the U.K. The Anarchist Black Cross is seeking people who are interested in helping raise funds and donations towards airfare and expenses from universities, funding organisations, private donations, even scamming government bodies if possible!! - any way of raising money because our resources are limited. If you would like to help out contact: Brisbane ABC and/or Angry People: P.O. Box 108, St Peters, NSW, 2044



Jax ABC Raided!

On Friday the 12th of January the house of Jacksonville (U.S.A) A.B.C was raided by 20 cops in full riot gear. During the consequent search of the house, without a warrant, the police confiscated two legally owned shotguns, a radio scanner, pamphlets, spraypaint and stencils. Police openly admitted that they only were there to gain information on the ABC and the Youth Action Movement. Twelve days later on the 24th of January, 3 Members of the Jax ABC were again arrested; two of them at their place of work, where 8 cops entered, and both subsequently lost their jobs. They were charged with Felony Criminal Mischief and spent 3 days in jail until the bail was reduced from the original \$10,000 that had been set. Jax ABC are filing a counter suit against police for violation of their civil rights.

All Jax ABC members lost their jobs due to the raids, news coverage and arrest. Funds are urgently needed so that Jax ABC can continue its activities and to help with their legal defence. Further information and support contact Jacksonville ABC: Suite #20/3628 Park St., Jacksonville, Florida, 32205